

Disenchanted Castles: Cervantes' Representation of the Ariostan Epic-Romance Split

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SCHOLARS HAVE LONG ACKNOWLEDGED the great influence that Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso* had on Cervantes' *Don Quixote*.¹ Despite this awareness of the *Furioso*'s importance for Cervantes, however, remarkably few studies have explored in any systematic way the relationship between the two texts. That is, while critics have long recognized the importance of the *Furioso* for Cervantes's novel in general terms, the truly methodical nature of Cervantes's references to the *Orlando Furioso* throughout the 1605 *Quixote* has remained largely unnoticed. Indeed, an analysis of the ways in which Cervantes rewrites certain key episodes of the *Furioso* is in fact vital to our understanding of his perception of perhaps the greatest literary quarrel of his time: the dispute over the *Furioso*'s status as epic.

THE POLEMIC IN ITALY AND ITS RESONANCE IN SPAIN

When Ariosto's continuation of Matteo Boiardo's chivalric poem *Orlando Innamorato* was first published in 1516, literary scholars perceived it as more than another romance: for them, it was essentially an heroic epic poem—an *Aeneid* for its time—due in large part to its encomiastic account of the genealogy of Ariosto's patron, Ippolito d'Este (Chevalier 9). Around the middle of the century, however, the *Furioso*'s status as epic began to come ever more into question. According to Weinberg, the earliest extant evidence of a polemic surrounding Ariosto's poem is Simone Ferrari's *Apologia breve sopra tutto l'Orlando Furioso*, where the author defended the

1 The most complete study in recent years on Cervantes and Ariosto is that of Thomas Hart. See also Quint (1997), Brownlee, C. Donato, Durán, Güntert, Pérez, and Selig.

Furioso against attacks by now-unknown critics who viewed it as violating neo-Aristotelian ideals of unity and verisimilitude (954). This polemic surrounding the *Furioso* went on for a number of years, but only in the last two decades of the sixteenth century, with the publication of Torquato Tasso's epic *Gerusalemme Liberata* (1581) and his corresponding neo-Aristotelian theoretical arguments, did the battle over Ariosto's text become truly heated (as now critics of the *Furioso* had a concrete example of what they deemed a genuine modern epic with which to contrast the *Furioso* and all its supposed faults).²

With his various treatises Tasso attempted to redefine the Ariostan epic in terms of structure and content, preferring unity of action over the varied wanderings of romance and seriousness of tone over the often jocular nature of the *Furioso*. Tasso writes in one of the most famous passages in the *Discorsi dell'arte poetica*, for example:

[...] [G]iudico che da eccellente poeta [...] un poema formar si possa nel quale, quasi in un piccolo mondo, qui si leggano ordinanze d'esserciti, qui battaglie terrestri e navali, qui espugnazioni di città, [...]; la si trovino concilii celesti e infernali, là si veggiano sedizioni, là discordie, là errori, là venture [...]; ma che nondimeno uno sia il poema che tanta varietà di materia contegna, una la forma e la favola sua, e che tutte queste cose siano di maniera composte che l'una e l'altra riguardi, l'una all'altra corrisponda, l'una dall'altra o necessariamente o verisimilmente dependa, sì che una sola parte o tolta via o mutata di sito, il tutto ruini (847).

[...]I think an excellent poet [...] can shape a poem in which, as in a little world, we read of mustering armies, land and sea battles, conquests of cities, [...] and we find heavenly and hellish assemblies and see sedition, discord, wanderings, adventures [...]. And still, the poem which contains such a variety of matter is one; its form and its plot are one; and all these things are brought together in such a way that one thing shows consideration for another, one thing corresponds to another, and through either necessity or verisimilitude one thing depends on another in such a way that by removing a single part or by changing its place, we destroy the whole (131).³

2 For the most complete account of the polemic, see Weinberg.

3 All English translations of Tasso taken from Rhu.

Thus, while Tasso does not completely condemn the *varietà* inherent in romance— indeed, elsewhere in his discussion he links it to the abundance of God’s creation— he does advocate a more teleological and verisimilar approach to this variety, in which each portion of the epic leads toward some greater meaning. Chevalier cites numerous critics who, now armed with what they considered a true epic with which to back up their claims, criticized Ariosto’s lack of unity even more harshly than before (288). Though Tasso’s supporters clearly began to outnumber Ariosto’s as the turn of the century approached, the *Furioso*’s author did not find himself completely without supporters in the debate: Francesco Patrizi, for example, attacked neo-Aristotelian poetics on a variety of fronts, including the fact that in his mind it was useless to base a theory of literature on a text as incomplete and unclear as the *Poetics* (203).

Given the importance of this polemic in Italian literary circles, it is not surprising that similar discussions began to take abroad in Spain, as well.⁴ There, one of the most vociferous proponents of Tasso’s theories was Cristóbal de Mesa, whose *poemas heróicos* were praised by Lope de Vega, Luis Barahona de Soto, Francisco de Quevedo, and, most important for this study, Cervantes himself (Caravaggi 63). Mesa was an acquaintance of Tasso’s during the former’s stay in Rome, from 1588 to 1592; and in the prologue to his heroic poem *Las Navas de Tolosa* (1594), he references key issues in the Ariosto-Tasso polemic, declaring:

...[N]o es mi intención hacer comparación aquí de los escritores de nuestro tiempo, dando nombre de eróico a solo el Torcuato, ni entrar en la controversia de las academias Florentina y Napolitana en sí al Ariosto, por no conocersele sujeto señalado, o de Orlando, o del cerco de Paris, o guerras de Agramante, y haber hecho medio poema prosiguiendo en Enamorado, y comenzar por el episodio de la huida de Angélica, se le haya de atribuir antes nombre de romanzador que de épico (“A los Letores”).

That Cervantes read and praised Mesa’s text attests to his familiarity with the key issues in the debate at issue here. Moreover, as Daniel Eisenberg notes, the two writers came into contact at numerous points

4 In *Cervantes’s Theory of the Novel*, Riley points out the impossibility of knowing with any certainty what theoretical sources Cervantes may have consulted. He declares El Pinciano and Tasso as the most likely candidates, however (10).

throughout their lives, giving Cervantes ample opportunity to have discussed Tasso's ideas with Mesa.⁵ Even had Cervantes not read Mesa's work or discussed Tasso's ideas with him in person, however, he would have had other opportunities to come into contact with Tasso's theories: the *Gerusalemme* was very popular in Spain throughout the century following its publication (Arce 11), and the fact that Tasso's *apologia* opening the poem includes his own discussion of the relative merits (or lack thereof) of the *Furioso* made key ideas in the debate available to any Spaniard who read Italy's newest epic.

As *Gerusalemme* came to displace the *Furioso* as the model modern epic, the tenor of those Spanish works inspired by Ariosto's poem began to evolve as well, treating the Italian tale more as chivalric novel, or romance, than as serious epic poetry (Chevalier 352). Cervantes's *Don Quixote*—and in particular the 1605 portion—may be seen as the epitome of this new way of representing Ariosto's text. It must be remembered, after all, that Cervantes composed his novel during the years of greatest intensity in the debate over the status of the Italian poem. Because the *Quixote's* publication at the beginning of the seventeenth century comes at such a critical juncture for Ariosto's reception both at home and in Spain, it is important to consider more closely the ways in which Cervantes dialogues with the Italian text's ambiguity. As mentioned, I would argue specifically that the much-discussed intercalated structure closing the 1605 volume of the *Quixote* may be better understood when interpreted not just as a meditation on chivalric literature in general, but specifically as a reflection of Tasso's displacement of Ariosto as epic.

D ISENCHANTED CASTLES

In order to appreciate the complex reflection of the *Furioso* polemic mirrored in the closing chapters of the 1605 *Quixote*, we must first clarify the nature of what I would argue is its Ariostan narratological and thematic counterpart: Atlante's castle. In canto 12 of the *Furioso*, the wizard Atlante

5 As evidence of their acquaintance, Eisenberg states that "Both frequented literary circles in the capital; both received assistance from the Conde de Lemos, and wanted to accompany him to Naples; both dedicated books to the Duque de Béjar, although it is not documented that Cervantes received the help from Béjar that Mesa did. Cervantes praised Mesa in both the *Parnaso* and in the 'Canto de Caliope'; Mesa thanked and praised Cervantes in his *Restauración de España*. The two obviously knew each other, and Tasso would have been a logical topic to discuss" (310).

attempts to protect his protégé Ruggiero by trapping him in an enchanted castle in order to keep him from his predicted death. Ruggiero, a pagan knight destined to convert to Christianity and found the Este lineage, thus incarnates the convergence of the *Furioso's* epic and romance worlds. Atlante traps other knights in his castle as well, so that they will never have the opportunity to kill Ruggiero. The wizard adopts the form of the person or object most desired by each knight in order to attract him into the castle. Once there, the knights spend their days pursuing in vain the false images of the objects of their desire, their paths continuously crossing:

Di su di giù va il conte Orlando e riede;
né per questo può far gli occhi mai lieti
che riveggiano Angelica, o quel ladro
che n'ha portato il bel viso leggiadro.

E mentre or quinci or quindi invano il passo
movea, pien de travaglio e di pensieri,
Ferrau, Brandimarte e il re Gradasso,
re Sacripante ed altri cavalieri
vi ritrovò, ch'andavano alto e basso,
né men facena di lui vani sentieri;
e si ramaricavan del malvagio
invisibil signor de quel palagio" (12.10-11).

[Upstairs and downstairs and all over again Orlando hunted, but there was no joy for him: never did he set eyes upon Angelica or the thief who had wafted her sweet delicate face from his sight. And while vainly pursuing his quest hither and thither, full of care and anxiety, he came across Ferrau, Brandimart, King Gradasso, and King Sacripant and other knights who were also searching high and low, pursuing a quest as fruitless as his own. They all complained about the malicious invisible lord of that palace]⁶

In this sense, the castle may be seen as a sort of microcosm of Ariosto's chivalric world, which, as Eugenio Donato observes, is based in large part on the representation of desire.⁷ The entire first part of the poem, that is,

6 All English translations of the *Furioso* are from Waldman.

7 Donato writes, "Practically every incident in the vast construct of the *Furioso* con-

revolves around the constant movement of knights in search of the objects of their desire, objects concentrated in Atlante's enchanted castle.

One of the Christian paladins, Astolfo, eventually manages to destroy the enchanted castle, allowing the trapped knights to continue their wanderings. The significance of the castle's destruction is evident if we consider that in the first 40-canto version of the poem this key episode took place in canto 20—that is, at the *Furioso's* precise midpoint. David Quint has noted a change in tone evident after this point in the text: Ariosto appears increasingly to distance himself from the interlaced structure of chivalric romance, and to emphasize to a greater extent the more epic nature of his poem (*Atlante* 87).

Significantly, the destruction of Atlante's castle marks not only a sort of narratological transition, but a clear change in worldview on the part of the wizard as well. Intrinsicly linked to the increasingly epic nature of the tale—with its inevitable outcome, Ruggiero's death—is Atlante's growing feeling of powerlessness and disenchantment, as the wizard eventually dies from the pain of knowing that he is incapable of saving his protégé from his predicted fate. In canto 36, Atlante speaks to Ruggiero from the tomb, saying:

Ruggier, se ti guardò, mentre che visse,
 il tuo maestro Atlante, tu lo sai.
 Di te senti' predir le stele fisse,
 che tra' cristiani a tradigion morrai;
 e perché il male influo non seguisse,
 tenertene lontan m'affaticai:
 né ostare al fin potendo alla tua voglia,
 infermo caddi, e me mori' di doglia (36.64).

[Ruggiero, you know how your mentor Atlas protected you while he lived. I had heard the fixed stars' prediction that you were to die, betrayed, in the Christian camp, and to avert the evil influence, I tried to keep you away. But, unable in the end to oppose your will, I fell sick and died of grief.]

As *magico* and figure of the chivalric poet, Atlante has disappeared, al-

sists of a tale of characters pursuing, with more or less success, the usually elusive object of their desire. The nature of the object matters little; it can be a woman, a helmet, a sword, a horse, or simply glory and renown" (33).

lowing the text to continue toward its epic conclusion, which is thus inextricably intertwined with Atlante's impotence.

It is precisely this sort of epic "disenchantment" to which Cervantes pays homage in the concluding episodes of the first volume of the *Quixote*, which rewrite the three most important phases in the tale of Atlante and his castle—the trapped knights and the intercalated structure that they bring to the forefront, the destruction of the castle, and Atlante's resultant disillusionment. Significantly, as Edward Dudley has observed, the most complex series of intercalated tales in the *Quixote* (which become concentrated in the inn) takes place between the two "yelmo de Mambrino" episodes, Mambrino's helmet being a coveted object in the *Furioso* as well and therefore a textual marker of Ariostan influence. Quixote's initial taking of the "helmet" from the barber and the later discussion at the inn of that item's true purpose bookend the complex series of intercalated tales. Dudley, however, does not explore Cervantes' possible motivation for placing the interlaced tales against this Ariostan backdrop.

In fact, a close reading of references to Ariosto throughout the series of episodes that take place between the two *yelmo* incidents reveals that these allusions are most frequently juxtaposed with discussions of storytelling, indicating that Cervantes wished his reader to reflect on issues of specifically Ariostan narrative structure. For example, immediately before Quixote's initial seizure of the helmet is Sancho's attempt to tell the story of the shepherd Lope Ruiz's desire to pursue Torralba. When Sancho begins to recount Lope's crossing a river with one individual goat after another, Quixote scolds him for his meandering story-telling: "Haz cuenta que las pasó todas; no andes yendo y viniendo desa manera, que no acabarás de pasarlas en un año" (244). The link between this narrative *ir y venir*, inspired by Lope's desire for Torralba and representative of chivalric romance structures, and the appearance of Mambrino's helmet in the subsequent chapter should not be overlooked.

The association between Ariostan references and narrative concerns is only strengthened by Quixote's encounter shortly thereafter with Cardenio, another Ariostan "mad knight" of sorts. Significantly, much as he did with the *yelmo de Mambrino*, Cervantes links Cardenio from the outset with discussions of narrative unity. When Quixote asks Cardenio to explain why he has come to Sierra Morena, the latter prefaces his statements by demanding a promise that Quixote and Sancho will not interrupt him and threatening to cease narration should they do so. At this point, the omni-

scient narrator tells the reader that Cardenio's demand brings to mind for Quixote Sancho's aborted tale of Lope Ruiz. Through these parallel references to Ariostoan elements and concerns with unity of action, Cervantes subtly encourages his reader to view the intercalated episodes marked off by the *yelmo* in the specific context of questions of narrative.⁸

Cervantes reinforces the importance of an Ariostoan reading of the intercalated inn events through the mysterious presence at the core of the action of what Hart calls the only major "demonstrable borrowing" (i.e., complete episode) from the *Furioso* in the *Quixote*-- the interpolated novel *El curioso impertinente* (4). From the beginning, critics have struggled with this tale's seeming irrelevance to the furtherance of the novel's main action. Cervantes himself refers in the second part of his novel (1615) to critics' commentary on the apparently odd placement of *El curioso*. There, before Quixote makes his third and final sally, Sansón Carasco tells the would-be knight of the published account of his and Sancho's adventures and states that "Una de las tachas que ponen a la tal historia es que su autor puso en ella una novela intitulada *El curioso impertinente*, no por mala ni por mal razonada sino por no ser de aquel lugar, ni tiene que ver con la historia de su merced del señor don Quixote" (457). The *Curioso* does have at least one important function, however: to remind the reader to consider the series of intercalated events between the two *yelmo de Mambrino* incidents in conjunction with Ariosto. The *Curioso* comes, after all, at the exact midpoint of the 24-chapter arc between the *yelmo* episodes, making the entire interpolated structure hinge on references to the *Furioso*.⁹

The question becomes, then, that of assessing the significance of the inn episodes' convergence in conjunction with Ariosto's text. Any approach to this question must begin by exploring the relationship between the inn

8 Using different evidence from that which I present here, Stephen Gilman has argued as well that Cervantes's Sierra Morena episodes hinge on references to the *Furioso* (156-64). The conclusions that Gilman draws from his observations, however, link Cervantes's weaving together of narrative threads to the *comedia* genre, rather than to any possible reflection on the *Furioso*.

9 In his recent article "The Genealogy of the Novel from the *Odyssey* to *Don Quixote*," Quint notes another important "centrally located" episode in Cervantes's novel, and that is Quixote's decision in chapter 26 of the 52-chapter 1605 *Quixote* to reject the mad Orlando as a model. Quint observes that although Quixote explicitly distances himself from the model of Orlando here, Cervantes implicitly pays homage to the *Furioso* by placing the episode at the midpoint of his text, just as Orlando's madness takes place at the midpoint of the 1532 final edition of the *Furioso* (23).

and its clearest Ariostan counterpart, Atlante's castle. As with the latter, the inn may also be read as a point of narrative transition, the site where the first volume of the work reaches its culmination.¹⁰ In particular, it is here where the intercalated structure that comes to dominate the first part of the *Quixote* is most evident, recalling Atlante's castle as *núcleo romancesco* of the *Furioso*. Various narrative threads cross in the inn, nearly all of them based on some form of desire, as many of the characters mentioned both in the interpolated tales and previously in the *Quixote's* principal narrative converge there: Cardenio and Lucinda, Fernando and Dorotea, the captive and his brother, and the barber and his helmet.

Discussing the differences between Cervantes's representation of the inn here and previously, Emilio González López writes:

Nos ofrece Cervantes, en estos capítulos, que constituyen casi la tercera parte del *Quixote* de 1605, una visión un tanto distinta de la misma venta; pues ésta no es sólo un lugar de reunión, al modo de la que presentó Chaucer en sus *Cuentos de Canterbury*, de gentes que van juntas en peregrinación a un determinado pueblo, sino que es el punto de reunión de una serie de gentes que van, empujadas por la vida, en distintas direcciones (307).

Contrary to the *Furioso*, in the *Quixote* the characters who encounter each other in the inn, under the *yelmo de Mambrino* narrative arc, at least initially appear to be reunited with the objects of their desire (although, as we will see, these reunions are rendered problematic as the text progresses). In his edition of the *Quixote*, Murillo relates this emphasis on the lovers' reunions to two literary trends predominant in Spain at the time: the *comedia*, in which it was customary to pair couples at the closing stages of the play, and the *novela sentimental*, with its emphasis on "happy coincidence" (456 n.).¹¹

With regard to the series of reunions, Dudley has argued that under the spell of the *yelmo de Mambrino*, Quixote is able to act as a *mag*o of sorts, intervening in others' lives in order to tie together the various narrative threads running through the inn:

¹⁰ This inn comes into play twice in the first volume of the novel. My discussion will focus on the second time that Quixote arrives there, after his stay in the Sierra.

¹¹ As mentioned earlier, Quint as well links Cervantes's use of interlace here to the typical *comedia* structure.

This central block forms the climax of the novel and creates the effective breathing space for Don Quixote's triumphant transformation of art into life. Never again is he so fully Don Quixote as in this focal core of Part One (chapters xxi to xlv). The final two literary constructs develop on his return to the village: the Canon of Toledo's potential novel of chivalry, discussed at length with Don Quixote, and the curiously unsatisfactory story of Eugenio, Leandra and Vicente de la Roca. Don Quixote debates with the Canon and fights with Eugenio, indicative of the unresolved and unresolvable problems they present. They belong to his deincarnation as a Magus, and they share with him a generic crisis which is left hanging at the close of Part One (360).

If we accept Dudley's argument, that is, Quixote's success as "Magus" is based on his bringing closure to the tales of desire that play such an important role during this portion of the novel.

The demystification of the *yelmo de Mambrino* at the end of chapter 44, where Sancho declares it a *baciyelmo* (540), however, brings about what Dudley refers to as the "generic crisis" hanging over the 1605 volume's final chapters. As we will see, the compromise between basin and enchanted helmet marks a clear point of transition with respect to the interpolated tales, as Don Quixote subsequently appears to lose the control that he had exercised previously.

Indeed, as the debate about the helmet continues in the subsequent chapter, there emerges a growing sense of chaos at the inn—a narrative development once again explicitly linked to Ariosto's text. When the "baciyelmo" discussion becomes more heated, with an officer of the Holy Brotherhood declaring the helmet a basin and Quixote responding, "Mentís como un bellaco villano" (543), a brawl breaks out. Cervantes describes the resulting confusion as follows:

[...] [T]oda la venta era llantos, voces, gritos, confusiones, temores, sobresaltos, desgracias, cuchilladas, mojicones, palos, coces y efusión de sangre, y en la mitad de este caos, máquina y laberinto de cosas, se le representó en la memoria de don Quixote que *se veía metido de hoz y de coz en la discordia del campo de Agramante*" (544).

This Ariostan allusion recalls the infamous confusion among Agram-

ante's troops in the *Furioso*, as Discord wreaks havoc on their camp on the Christians' behalf.

Like Atlante, then, Quixote's "deincarnation as Magus" is reflected in his inability to control events around him, and what emerges at this point in the tale is a growing sense of powerlessness reminiscent of Atlante's disillusionment discussed above. Indeed, soon after the *baciyelmo* debate, the priest prepares to take Don Quixote home; and at this point the narrative threads that had appeared so neatly tied now begin to unravel. The narrator comments:

En tanto que las damas del castillo esto pasaban con Don Quixote, el cura y el barbero se despidieron de don Fernando y sus camaradas, y del capitán y de su hermano y todas aquellas contentas señoras, especialmente de Dorotea y Luscinda. Todos se abrazaron y quedaron de darse noticia de sus sucesos, diciendo don Fernando al cura dónde había de escribirle para avisarle en lo que paraba don Quixote, asegurándole que no habría cosa que más gusto le diese que saberlo, y que él asimesmo le avisaría de todo aquello que él viese que podría darle gusto, así de su casamiento, como del bautismo de Zoraida, y suceso de don Luis, y vuelta de Luscinda a su casa (559).

Here, the apparent resolution to the tales is remanded to some future time, and it becomes apparent that we do not know if Quixote's interventions will have a lasting effect. It is as if all of his efforts throughout the inn episode were being undone little by little.

At this point in the narrative, Quixote finds himself completely powerless, enclosed in a cage and believing himself to be the victim of an evil enchanter. For a reader attuned to the parallels between the events in the inn and those of Ariosto's text, the unraveling of the chivalric interlaced structure at this point would seem to signal the development of a more epic portion of the novel, just as the destruction of Atlante's castle allowed the *Furioso's* epic narrative to unfold. Cervantes in fact plays with these expectations through his development of the Canon's subsequent tirade against novels of chivalry. As Quixote leaves the inn and heads for home enclosed in a cage, the Canon appears and begins a discussion with the priest in which he attacks typical chivalric novels for their lack of verisimilitude:

Y según a mí me parece, este género de escritura y composición cae

debajo de aquel de las fábulas que llaman milesias, que son cuentos disparatados que atienden solamente a deleitar, y no a enseñar [...]. [L] a mentira es mejor cuanto más parece verdadera, y tanto más agrada cuanto tiene más de lo dudoso y posible. [...] No he visto ningún libro de caballerías que haga un cuerpo de fábula entero con todos sus miembros, de manera que el medio corresponda al principio y el fin al principio y medio, sino que los componen con tantos miembros, que más parece que llevan intención a formar una quimera o un monstruo que a hacer una figura proporcionada (564-65).

With his argument here—that chivalric tales lack both some greater moral purpose and the unity of structure necessary for truly great literature—the Canon clearly echoes Tasso. Alban Forcione has observed numerous other parallels between the Canon and Tasso in his chapter on the former's conversation with Quixote as well, and he makes clear that the Canon enters the text at this point as a mouthpiece for Tasso's ideas.

Indeed, it is no coincidence that the Canon espouses theory reminiscent of Tasso's writings precisely at this point in the novel. As the Ariostan interlace begins to unravel, the fact that the imprisoned and enchanted *hidalgo* now finds himself at the mercy of the Tasso-spouting Canon reflects Tasso's ultimate victory in the epic-romance polemic, a polemic whose key elements have been referenced subtly yet systematically throughout the intercalated portion of the novel. Rather than serving simply as an isolated and incidental reflection of the debate, that is, the Canon's discussion forms part of an intricate pattern of interlaced episodes meant to be read in terms of specifically Ariostan narrative theory and practice. The complex web that Cervantes weaves in his 1605 *Quixote* thus reveals a carefully-constructed homage to one of the greatest literary quarrels of his day, as the *Furioso*-inspired narrative threads framed by the *yelmo* episodes must eventually make way for a new, Tasso-oriented literary domain.

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